

REMARKS

Favorable reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections set forth in the above-mentioned Official Action in view of the foregoing amendments and the following remarks are respectfully requested.

Applicant's Attorney thanks the Examiner for the courtesies extended in the interview of November 21, 2006 during which revisions to Claim 8 proposed by Applicant's Attorney to overcome the Tanaka reference were discussed and agreed upon.

With regard to the rejection of Claims 8, and 10 through 13 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,471,286 (Tanaka), Claim 8 as further amended by this Supplemental Amendment is believed to be completely distinguished from Tanaka.

Independent Claim 8 as currently amended is directed to image forming apparatus in which a rotatable image bearing member bears an electrostatic image. A first developer carrying member carries a developer and develops the electrostatic image. The first developer is opposed to the image bearing member with a first gap. A first pair of regulating members regulate the first gap. The first pair of regulating members are in contact with one end portion and the other end portion in the rotational axial direction of the image bearing member, respectively. A second developer carrying member carries a developer and develops the electrostatic image. The second developer carrying member is disposed downstream of the first developer carrying member in the rotating direction of the image bearing member and is opposed to the image bearing member a second gap. A second pair of regulating members regulate the second gap and are in contact with one end portion and the other end portion of the rotational axial direction of the image bearing

member, respectively. Positions at which the first pair of regulating members are in contact with the image bearing member are longitudinally displaced from positions at which the second pair of regulating members are in contact with the image bearing member.

In Applicant's view, Tanaka discloses a developing unit that has first and second developing rollers supplying a photosensitive member with developer having the same color. Plural spacers are provided on the developing unit, so that when the developing unit is advanced such that it is pressed against the photosensitive drum, these spacers contact the photosensitive drum and maintain predetermined spacing or gaps therebetween between the first and second developing rollers and the photosensitive drum. For example, in one embodiment, a spacer is provided at each longitudinal end of each developing roller. In another embodiment, a spacer is provided at a single end of each developing roller as well as at an intermediate position between the developing rollers.

It is a feature of Claim 8 as currently amended that positions at which the first pair of regulating members are in contact with the image bearing member are longitudinally displaced from positions at which the second pair of regulating members are in contact with the image bearing member. In contrast and as discussed in the Amendment filed november 8, 2006, Tanaka only shows regulating member 4 and the regulating member 7 of Figs. 2 and 7 are brought into contact at the same position in the rotational axis direction of the image bearing member 1 and the regulating member 3 and the regulating member 6 are brought into contact at the same position in the rotational axis direction of the image bearing member. Accordingly, it is not seen that Tanaka's arrangement of regulating members in the same position in the rotational

axis direction of the image bearing member in any way teaches or suggests the feature of longitudinal displacement of the positions of a first pair of regulating members with respect to the positions of a second pair of regulating members as in Claim 8. It is therefore believed that Claim 8 as currently amended is completely distinguished from Tanaka and is allowable.

For the foregoing reasons and the reasons set forth in the Amendment filed November 8, 2006, Applicant submits that the present invention, as recited in independent claim 8, is patentably defined over the cited art, whether that art is taken individually or in combination.

Dependent claims 10-12, 13 and 18 also should be deemed allowable, in their own right, for defining other patentable features of the present invention in addition to those recited in independent claim 8. Further individual consideration of these dependent claims is requested.

Applicants further submit that this Supplemental Amendment and the Amendment After Final Rejection filed November 8, 2006 places this application in condition for allowance. This Supplemental Amendment and the Amendment After Final Rejection filed November 8, 2006 were not earlier presented because Applicants believed that the prior Amendment placed the application in condition for allowance. Accordingly, entry of the instant Supplemental Amendment and the Amendment After Final Rejection filed November 8, 2006, as an earnest attempt to advance prosecution and reduce the number of issues, is requested under 37 CFR 1.116.

Favorable reconsideration, withdrawal of the rejections set forth in the above-noted Office Action and an early Notice of Allowance are also requested.

Applicants' attorney, William M. Wannisky, may be reached in our Washington, D.C. office by telephone at (202) 530-1010. All correspondence should be directed to our address listed below.

Respectfully submitted,

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